

Anaheim YMCA Then and Now

Yesica Zavala

The Anaheim YMCA was established in 1911 by Charles Pearson who was only 13 years old at the time. He went up Center Street riding his bicycle from business to business collecting \$1 from each business. This was essentially what helped Charles start the town's first YMCA. The primary location was a private house on Philadelphia Street.

The first early programming centered on establishing Hi-Y clubs in all the local schools. The first group of youth that the Anaheim Y worked with was young men. The mission focus was Christian principles and youth development.

Now fast forwarding to 2026 Anaheim Y is now known as the Anaheim Family YMCA. Known for the broad mission of community development, serving thousands of teens, youth and adults annually with diverse programs across multiple sites that include sports leagues, performing arts, gymnastics, swimming, afterschool programs and many more. With all these programs that the Y has now the mission is now focused on strengthening the community, healthy living, social responsibility, food insecurity, and water safety.



Charles Pearson rides through Anaheim to find the Anaheim Family YMCA



Anaheim High School, then and now.

Education in Anaheim

Michael Andrade

About 115 years ago (around 1910–1911), education in Anaheim looked very different from today. Schools were typically small, often one-room schoolhouses, especially in agricultural communities, and a single teacher taught multiple grade levels at once. Instruction focused on basic reading, writing, arithmetic, and moral lessons, with many children attending school only part-time because they were needed to help their families with farming, citrus groves, or household work. Resources were limited, technology was nonexistent, and continuing beyond elementary school was uncommon.

Today, Anaheim's education system is highly structured and diverse, with large public school districts, specialized teachers by subject and grade, access to technology, special education services, extracurricular programs, and a strong expectation that students complete high school and often pursue college or career training. Education has shifted from basic survival skills to preparing students for a global, technology-driven society.

Dancing for 115 Years

Jessica Lozoya

In 1911, The dance world focused on animal dances such as dance steps like the Turkey Trot, Grizzly Bear, and the Bunny Hug. This type of dance style was known as the "Ragtime Era". Animal dancing represented a significant shift in social dancing, breaking away from formal traditions and was a way to express oneself and bring people closer together. YMCAs offered a range of educational, recreational, and physical exercise programs, formal dance classes were not a standard offering at that time, and dance classes did not begin at the Y until the 1970s.



Today, as the dance world has evolved with so much culture and many dance styles, dance continues to be a universal language that serves as a powerful way to communicate, celebrate, heal, connect and to tell stories beyond words. Now, 115 years later, the Anaheim Family YMCA proudly offers more than 30 dance classes for youth, teens, and adults — continuing our tradition of bringing people together through movement, creativity, and community.

Fashion Trends Evolved

Teresa Ayon

In the early 20th century, YMCA clothing reflected the formality of the times. Men’s and women’s attire and daily wear was modest and structured — men wore button-down shirts and trousers, and women in coed programs wore long skirts and blouses. Physical recreational activity was still a new concept. Sports uniforms were typically woolen shirts and knee-length shorts which were heavy and restrictive by today’s standards.

People dressed with purpose. Clothing was functional within cultural norms: no exposed arms or legs in public recreation. This era emphasized discipline, character building, and decorum — and clothing reflected that philosophy.

The last decade has reinforced many fashion shifts while adding new values. Sustainability & Ethics: Members and leaders care about sustainability and ethics. Consumers care how clothes are made using recycled fabrics, eco-friendly brands, and fair labor. Diverse sports programming lead to diverse attire. With programs ranging from swim, basketball leagues, to community events, fashion at the YMCA is as varied as the people who participate.

There is a trend for tech-driven performance wear made of smart fabrics, breathable layers, and adaptive sizing to make active lifestyle clothing easier to wear — and more stylish on and off the gym floor!

Today, YMCA fashion is less about uniformity and more about expression, comfort, and inclusion.



YMCA Basketball children display tech driven performance wear.

Just Keep Swimming

Megan De La Cruz

In 1911, a swimming update would have appeared as a typed mimeograph or handwritten community circular, passed from hand to hand at local clubs or mailed to YMCA members. Its pages celebrated notable feats such as open-water challenges (British swimmer Bill Burgess’s English Channel accomplishments) alongside practical instruction emphasizing swimming as an essential life skill. YMCA swim programs of the early 1900s, including those like Anaheim’s, centered on water safety, discipline, and physical fitness, primarily serving young men in modest indoor pools or nearby waters. Instruction was formal and group-based, with swimmers dressed in heavy wool bathing suits, learning proper strokes, breath control, and personal conduct. News was narrative and descriptive, rich with wordy praise and sparse imagery, as photographs developed from glass plates were rare and carefully preserved. These newsletters were not fleeting announcements, but treasured keepsakes reflecting the YMCA’s enduring mission to build strong spirit, mind, and body through swimming.



More than a century later, the Anaheim Family YMCA proudly continues this tradition, welcoming swimmers of all ages into bright, modern pools guided by certified instructors. Swim lessons, teams, and aquatic programs are now supported by digital tools such as online registration, community events, and visually engaging newsletters. In 2026, swim updates are shared through weekly or monthly email communications featuring high-resolution photos, embedded links, event calendars, training tips, race results, and video highlights. Designed for quick viewing on mobile devices and tailored to swimmers ranging from youth participants to competitive athletes, these newsletters instantly connect families and the wider community through live results, technique insights, and celebratory stories. Though the methods and materials have evolved dramatically since 1911, the YMCA’s devotion to building strong spirit, mind, and body through swimming remains steadfast.

Update Your Language

Dipali Patel

Slang is informal language made up of words or phrases that develop within a culture or group and are often used to express ideas in a casual, creative, or playful way.

Slang from 1911 to 2026 shows the vast shift in culture. Slang in 1911 was shaped by newspapers and everyday street talk, whereas slang in 2026 is shaped by fast-moving social media trends and global mashups.

1911 Slang

Bee’s knees – excellent
 A real doll – an attractive person
 On the Level – honest
 Tickled Pink – excited/happy
 Hot Dog – Show-off
 You bet your boots - agreement

2026 Slang

Fire/slaps – excellent
 Baddie – an attractive person
 Real/No cap – trustworthy/honest
 Hyped/living for it – excited/happy
 Doing the most – show-off
 Bet – agreement

While slang in 1911 may have been cheeky, it still respected the formality of language. In 2026, slang is expressive, casual and values humor over traditional language rules.

Exploration; Earth and Beyond

Taavi Kaskla

The hunger for exploration is always within the human spirit. In the early 1900s, that hunger inspired expeditions to explore the areas of the earth where no human had gone before. On December 14th, 1911, the Norwegian team led by Roald Amundsen became the first documented humans to reach the polar south pole after several other expeditions got close. Reaching the south pole is a challenge because teams have extra equipment to carry just to stay warm. Amundsen's team like many others used their own feet, snow shoes, skis, horses, and dog sled teams to march across the empty Antarctic plains. Arctic explorers had to be ready to stave off starvation, depression, fatigue, scurvy, and frostbite during the grueling treks. Explorers relied on canned food such as pemmican, a very dense puck of dried meat and berries, for nutrition. They stayed warm by wearing sealskin, gaberdine, and reindeer leather.

In contemporary times, humans have turned to the cosmos to feed the exploration hunger. While new technology such as rockets and satellites helps humans travel distances farther than anyone in 1911 could have imagined, astronauts still must make do with minimal supplies like their arctic explorer predecessors. An astronaut will not find pemmican in their rations today, but they will still find preserved food (usually freeze-dried) that can last weeks without refrigeration. Astronaut clothes are not made from sealskin, but they do have to be heavily insulated to keep out the cold in outer space.



Anaheim Sports; From the Y to the Pros

Byron Reliford

In 1911, organized baseball and basketball in Anaheim were limited to the local high school level. Anaheim High School, the first high school built in the Anaheim district and third in Orange County, had established sports programs, including basketball and baseball teams.



Anaheim did not have its own professional minor league team until much later, with the short-lived Anaheim Aces playing a single season in 1941. Similarly, professional basketball teams did not exist in California, much less in the city of Anaheim, at the time.

The Anaheim Family YMCA was also founded in 1911, the same year as the Anaheim High School graduating class of 1911, and has a long history of working with local schools, including the Anaheim Union High School District, offering youth programs like Hi-Y clubs, sports, and after-school care, continuing its legacy of community support for over a century.

Fast forward to 2026, there is now a Major League Baseball team, the Los Angeles Angels, who moved from LA to Anaheim. Although the Los Angeles Clippers are not directly from the city of Anaheim, these two professional teams have a great ongoing partnership with the Anaheim Family YMCA. Back in 1911, young athletes could only aspire to play at the high school level.

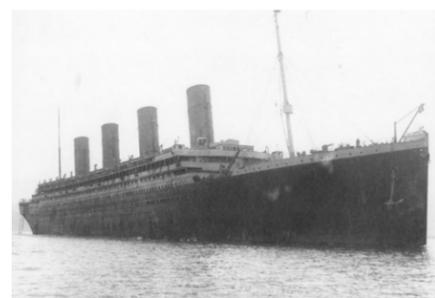
However, now that the Anaheim YMCA has become an anchor institution in the city, many young athletes can now dream of making it in the big leagues. The YMCA serves over 20,000 kids yearly with development in various sports.

Anaheim High School has also sent many of its students to play at the college level as well. Both of its girls' and boys' sports teams play in the CIF divisions, which are very competitive across all of Southern California.

Summer Travel Plans

Taavi Kaskla

Thinking of traveling this summer? How will you get there? In 1911, you might have taken the RMS Olympic. RMS Olympic was one of three sister ships built and operated by White Star Lines. RMS Olympic's sister ships were the RMS Titanic and RMS Britannic, which both had ill-fated careers. The RMS Olympic however had a longer career that operated until 1935. Nicknamed "Old Reliable," RMS Olympic had an important role during WWI as a troop and supply transport. RMS Olympic even sank a German U-Boat on May 12, 1918, by ramming into it.



If you're heading for a cruise, chances are you will not be sinking U-boats. If you are going overseas, you are most likely going on an airplane. Gone are the days of trans-Atlantic sailing to and from USA and Europe. Instead, large cruise ships travel from port to port in popular destinations such as Alaska, Mexico, and the Caribbean Sea.

